

But He Works for the Shipyard!

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While onboard in the middle of a shipyard availability, I noticed a shipyard worker on the starboard yardarm. Although this motivated worker meant well, he improperly attached his safety harness. More specifically, it was attached to a cable that ran from above the yardarm all the way to the deck approximately 130 feet below. This worker was standing on the scaffolding and looking up because he wanted to get up to the next level. There were no deck boards on the next level, so he proceeded to move the boards from his level up to the next.


Meanwhile, I was trying to find someone from ship's force to stop this evolution. I found a crew member and showed him what I was observing, and I told him the quarterdeck watch needed to pass word to this worker to stop. The crew member told me, "Don't worry, senior chief; he works with the shipyard, and they have different procedures than we do."

"True," I said, "however, this is your ship and even if the shipyard has different rules, it is your responsibility to keep everyone on the ship safe, whether active duty or civilian."

We contacted the shipyard worker's supervisor, stopped the work, and diffused the situation. It had the potential to seriously hurt or kill someone.

Personnel always should follow OpNavInst. 5100.19D and applicable ships' instructions for working aloft procedures for Sailors. While some work forces may have slightly differing rules, being safe is the universal goal.

In this case, operational risk management would have made the difference. If we: 1) identify the hazard, 2) assess the hazard, 3) make risk decisions, 4) implement controls, and 5) supervise the task for change and effectiveness of the controls, we can prevent potentially life-threatening situations for ourselves and for anyone else aboard the ship.

Losing a life aboard ship is not worth it. Let's think about what we are doing and watch out for each other. 

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For More Info...

Refer to OpNavInst. 5100.19D, the NavOsh Program Manual for Forces Afloat, applicable ship's instructions, and OpNavInst. 3500.39, Operational Risk Management.

Photo by Fred Klinkenberger